The Eyes of the Universe

On the responsibility of being conscious

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The Eyes of the Universe

An essay on consciousness and responsibility in times of collapse

PROLOGUE

This book is born from a discomfort that won't disappear.

A sensation that doesn't come from fear or pessimism, but from something simpler and more honest: the feeling that we're drifting away from what's essential without realizing it. As if we had built a world so full of stimuli, symbols and abstract promises that we've lost sight of what sustains life itself.

For years I asked myself an uncomfortable question:

How is it possible that a conscious species, capable of understanding the universe, acts as if it doesn't care about destroying the only place where it can exist?

I didn't find a single answer. I found many.

Some came from biology: the evolutionary pressures that shaped our brain are not aligned with the scale of the world we've created.

Others came from culture: we've invented narratives that function as sedatives.

Others came from economic systems: structures that reward rapid destruction and punish slow responsibility.

And others, perhaps the deepest, came from philosophy: we don't know what

to do with consciousness or with the ethical weight that existing implies.

Over time, I came to understand something perhaps obvious but profoundly ignored:

we are not prepared for the scale of the consequences we have unleashed.

We are creatures designed to survive the next day, not to manage civilizations that depend on delicate planetary balances.

Our mind remains ancient, but our tools are immense.

However, reducing the problem to biology or economics would be a comfortable simplification.

What we face is something deeper:

a crisis of attention, a crisis of meaning and a crisis of responsibility, all at the same time.

We live saturated by distractions carefully designed to capture our mind.

The systems that should guide us toward collective survival have been captured by interests that benefit from our blindness.

And in the midst of all this, we've lost the capacity to feel the magnitude of what we're obligated to protect: **consciousness itself.**

Because ultimately, this is what's at stake.

Not the "future of humanity" as an empty cliché, but the continuity of the only conscious experience we know in the universe.

It's possible that other conscious beings exist somewhere.

But until we have proof, it’s us: this brief attempt of the cosmos to look at itself.

We are an improbable exception to billions of years of cosmic indifference.

A fragile, temporary and extraordinary anomaly.

And yet, we act as if we were eternal.

This book is not written to convince you of an ideology or to offer you salvation.

It’s not a political manual or a scientific treatise.

Nor is it a moralistic manifesto.

Its purpose is both more humble and more ambitious:

to try to think clearly in a historical moment when thinking has become almost impossible.

To try to look without anesthesia.

To try to name what we normally avoid.

To try to understand why we act the way we do.

To try to recover the dignity of responsibility in a world that rewards evasion.

I don’t claim to offer complete solutions. I don’t have them.

But I can try to build a framework from which to look at what’s happening to us without falling into cynicism or fantasy.

A framework where consciousness, fragility and responsibility are not abstract concepts, but the three threads that hold this book together.

If you continue reading, I propose a simple pact:

don’t look for comfort here.

Don’t look for obligatory optimism or seductive apocalypse.

Look, if you want, for something rarer: **honesty without despair.**

A way of being alive that doesn’t depend on denying what we know.

A way of being human that doesn’t require closing our eyes to endure ourselves.

A way of thinking that treats us as adults on a planet that no longer admits naivety or excuses.

If this book achieves anything, let it be this:

that for a moment you remember you’re part of the only place where the universe has learned to look at itself.

And that this simple truth is enough to demand more from us than what we’re doing.

Welcome.

Or rather: **open your eyes.**

CHAPTER 1: THE EYES OF THE UNIVERSE

For almost all of cosmic history, there was no one watching.

For thousands of millions of years, the universe existed in absolute silence: galaxies forming, stars exploding, entire worlds being born and dying without witnesses.

Everything happened, but nothing was lived.

The cosmos was full of processes and empty of experience.

And then, at a tiny point lost among millions of galaxies, something extraordinary happened: matter began to feel.

First in a rudimentary way, then in more complex forms, until reaching something that no other known physical phenomenon had achieved: the capacity to know it exists.

Consciousness is a statistical anomaly, an astonishing accident.

It’s not a granted privilege or a predetermined destiny.

It’s the improbable consequence of a series of chemical events chained over eons that converged in animals capable of looking, remembering, imagining

and anticipating.

We are that accident.

And although it’s hard for us to accept, we have no guarantee that the universe is full of beings like us.

We like to believe it because the alternative overwhelms us: that we are, perhaps, the only conscious crack in the entire extension of the known cosmos.

The only internal gaze of the universe upon itself.

Mysticism is not needed for this idea to matter.

We don’t need spirituality or teleology.

A simple fact suffices:

Without consciousness, there is no possible experience.

Without experience, there is no beauty or pain, no memory or meaning.

There is no lived universe, only an indifferent universe.

The universe can exist without us, but it cannot be felt without some being capable of feeling it.

That is the weight and rarity of our condition.

Human consciousness emerged on a planet that was not designed for us.

It appeared in a world that had already been functioning without spectators for billions of years. And it did so thanks to an extremely delicate balance: the right distance from the sun, the presence of liquid water, a stable atmosphere, a protective magnetic field, a series of unrepeatable geological and

evolutionary accidents.

We don’t remember this because we were born with it already given, but we live sustained by a series of coincidences that might never be repeated.

We are not the norm of the cosmos: we are the improbable exception.

And yet, we act as if all these conditions were permanent.

Conscious life not only appeared, but evolved to a form capable of understanding its own appearance.

That understanding should have been the beginning of a profoundly responsible, cautious, humble and curious species.

But our history took a different course.

While we developed the capacity to think, we also inherited another legacy: a brain molded by millions of years of survival in radically different conditions.

A brain designed to avoid immediate dangers, not to plan for centuries.

A brain trained to compete for scarce resources, not to understand the limits of a finite planet.

A brain prepared to defend a few, not to protect everyone’s future.

We are, at the same time, the most complex mind on the planet and an organism profoundly limited by its evolutionary origin.

This tension defines much of what we are.

And it also defines the silent catastrophe we’re entering.

But before talking about collapse, it’s necessary to understand our initial condition precisely.

Because if we don’t understand how extraordinary consciousness is, it will be impossible to understand how tragic losing it would be.

Consciousness is the only known phenomenon that allows the universe to contemplate itself from within.

We don’t know if it’s common or rare.

But we know that here, at this point in the cosmos, it exists.

Knowing this should be enough to treat it with a reverence that borders on the sacred, even if you don’t believe in anything sacred.

It should be enough to stop, observe, think and protect what makes existence worth experiencing.

But we don’t.

Not because we’re evil, but because we’re distracted.

Because the world we’ve built around our consciousness is so noisy, so demanding, so saturated with invented symbols, that it has displaced our natural capacity for contemplation.

We’ve replaced wonder with urgency.

Perspective with anxiety.

Admiration with accumulation.

Consciousness with distraction.

And thus, little by little, we’re extinguishing the only light the universe has lit here.

This chapter exists to remind you of something fundamental before moving forward:

nothing we'll see in the following pages makes sense if you forget how improbable it is to be alive and conscious at this instant.

You are a cosmic coincidence that sees, feels and understands.

You are one of the few forms—perhaps the only one—in which the universe has become capable of looking.

And if that gaze closes, even though the cosmos continues to exist, it will have lost the only way we know of touching itself from within.

That's why what we're doing is so serious.

And that's why understanding it clearly is the first act of responsibility.

CHAPTER 2: DISTRACTION

Consciousness is an improbable miracle.

But a miracle is useless if whoever carries it lives as if they didn’t have it.

At some point in our history, we stopped looking at the real world and began looking at a constructed world: an artificial layer we placed on top of physical reality that now functions as a permanent filter.

We no longer see the planet; we see its representations.

We no longer feel the present; we feel its substitutes.

We call this layer progress, culture, economy, technology, identity.

But its fundamental function is another: to occupy our attention.

It’s not accidental.

It’s not a cultural accident.

It’s not an individual psychological weakness.

It’s a system.

To understand it, we must make a distinction almost no one makes:

we live in two simultaneous worlds.

1. The real world - air, water, soil, energy - ecosystems, climate cycles - biophysical limits - laws of thermodynamics - life and death

A world that functions according to rules we didn't invent and cannot negotiate.

2. The invented world - money - borders - brands - professional careers - reputation - consumption - narrative genres - social aspirations

A world made of symbols, abstractions, agreed-upon fictions.

The problem is not that this second world exists.

Humans need symbols to organize complex societies.

The problem is that we've completely inverted them.

We treat the invented as if it were real.

And we treat the real as if it were invented.

Money—which is literally numbers we agreed to believe in—determines whether people eat or not.

Borders—imaginary lines—decide who lives and who dies.

Brands—fabrications designed to sell—define identities.

Meanwhile, air quality, soil fertility, oceanic stability—things that actually sustain life—are treated as "externalities."

Negotiable.

Secondary.

Abstract.

We’ve subordinated the physical to the symbolic.

And that inversion is lethal.

But there’s something even more perverse: this inversion is not accidental.

It’s designed.

Most people believe distraction is a side effect of modern life.

A cultural phenomenon.

Something that “just happens” when you have smartphones and social media.

But that’s not what’s happening.

Distraction is not a side effect. It’s the product.

The attention economy is not an economy that sells products and competes for attention as a secondary resource.

It’s an economy where **attention itself is the merchandise.**

Apps are not designed to be useful.

They’re designed to be addictive.

Social media is not designed to connect you.

It’s designed to trap you.

News platforms are not designed to inform you.

They’re designed to keep you anxious and returning.

Behind every interface that demands your gaze, there’s an engineering team whose sole function is to maximize the time you spend looking at a screen.

Teams of psychologists, neuroscientists, designers, all working together with one goal:

to occupy your mind.

And they do it effectively.

The average person spends more than six hours a day looking at digital screens.

Six hours not looking at the sky, not feeling the air, not thinking without interruption.

Six hours of fragmented attention, algorithmically manipulated, monetized per second.

This is not paranoia. It's documented.

Companies measure engagement in milliseconds.

They optimize to the neuronal level.

They know exactly which colors, which sounds, which notifications, which content structures generate the strongest responses in your brain.

And they use that knowledge not to inform you, not to enrich you, not to free you.

They use it to capture you.

The consequences are predictable.

When your attention is systematically captured, three things happen:

1. **You lose perspective.**

You can’t see the whole when your mind is occupied with fragments.

You can’t think long-term when you’re interrupted every 30 seconds.

You can’t distinguish what’s essential from what’s urgent when everything screams for your attention with the same intensity.

2. You lose connection with the real.

What you don’t see doesn’t affect you.

What you don’t feel doesn’t move you.

If you spend your day immersed in screens, physical reality becomes abstract.

The planet is no longer a place you inhabit, but a distant concept.

Ecosystems are names you read, not bodies you touch.

Other people are avatars, not presences.

And your own body is an object you occasionally remember when it hurts.

3. You lose the capacity to act.

Action requires sustained attention, clear thought, patience, planning.

But in a world of constant interruptions, none of that is possible.

All that’s left is reaction.

You respond to stimuli, but you don’t decide.

You consume content, but you don’t create meaning.

You move, but you don’t choose direction.

And the most perverse part is that this system doesn’t feel oppressive.

It doesn’t feel like a system at all.

It feels like freedom.

You “choose” to look at your phone.

You “choose” to watch one more episode.

You “choose” to scroll endlessly.

But those aren’t choices.

They’re conditioned responses to carefully designed stimuli.

You’re not choosing. You’re being chosen.

Your attention is being extracted like a natural resource.

And like any extractive industry, what’s left behind is degradation.

A degraded attention span.

A degraded capacity to think.

A degraded connection with reality.

This is why consciousness, as miraculous as it is, doesn’t guarantee anything.

If consciousness is occupied, it doesn’t matter that it exists.

If your mind is captured, you can be the most complex being on the planet and still act like you’re blind.

And that’s exactly what’s happening.

We have the capacity to understand the universe, but we use it to consume memes.

We have the capacity to contemplate existence, but we use it to compare lives on Instagram.

We have the capacity to think about the future, but we use it to binge-watch series.

This is not moral judgment.

It’s not condemnation.

It’s observation.

We are being systematically distracted from what matters.

And it’s working.

CHAPTER 3: SELFISHNESS

We are not evil. We are obsolete.

Distraction explains why we don’t look.

But it doesn’t explain why, even when we do look, we don’t act.

Because the problem is not just that we’re occupied.

The problem is that, even when we’re not, we continue acting against our own long-term interests.

Even when we understand the scale of collapse.

Even when we see the consequences.

Even when we know what we should do.

We continue prioritizing the immediate, the individual, the close.

This is not a defect of character.

It’s biology.

We are prisoners of an evolutionary design that no longer serves us.

Let me be more precise.

Your brain was not designed to care about the future of the planet.

It was designed to survive in a very specific environment: small groups of hunter-gatherers in African savannas tens of thousands of years ago.

In that environment, the relevant dangers were immediate:

A predator.

A rival.

A shortage of food tomorrow.

The relevant rewards were also immediate:

High-calorie food.

Sexual opportunities.

Status within the group.

Long-term planning in that context meant thinking about the next season. Maybe the next year.

Never the next century.

Never the next generation beyond your children.

Never the stability of global ecosystems.

Because in that environment, nothing you did could affect those scales.

Your actions had local, temporary, reversible consequences.

You couldn’t destroy a forest even if you wanted to.

You couldn’t alter the climate even if you tried.

You couldn’t extinguish species even if it occurred to you.

The world was too big and you were too small.

And your brain adapted to that reality.

What happened then?

We invented agriculture. Cities. Trade. Industry. Technology.

We multiplied. We expanded. We accelerated.

And suddenly, in an instant on the evolutionary scale, the world stopped being too big.

Now **we** are too big.

Now our actions do have planetary consequences.

Now we can destroy forests.

Now we can alter the climate.

Now we can extinguish species.

Now we can collapse ecosystems that took millions of years to stabilize.

But our brain didn’t change.

We still have the same brain that thought about tomorrow’s meal.

The same brain that competed for resources in a group of 150 people.

The same brain that couldn’t conceive of consequences beyond what it could see with its own eyes.

And that brain, that wonderfully complex but tragically limited organ, is the one trying to manage a technological civilization that affects billions of people and depends on planetary balances we barely understand.

This is the central tragedy.

We are creatures designed for one world managing another for which we are not equipped.

This manifests in predictable ways.

1. Temporal discounting

Your brain assigns less value to future rewards than to present ones.

This is adaptive when the future is uncertain.

If you don’t know if you’ll be alive tomorrow, it makes sense to eat now rather than save for later.

But in a civilization dependent on long-term planning, this bias is lethal.

You know you should save for retirement, but you spend today.

You know you should take care of your health, but you prioritize immediate pleasure.

You know you should protect the climate, but you consume as if there were no consequences.

Not because you’re irrational.

But because your brain assigns exponentially less weight to distant consequences.

2. In-group bias

Your brain is designed to care about your group.

Your family.

Your tribe.

Your community.

Those you see every day, those who could help you or harm you in the immediate term.

That’s adaptive when groups are small and interactions are face-to-face.

But in a globalized world, this bias is lethal.

You care more about a person from your country than about a thousand people from another.

You care more about your generation than about generations that haven’t been born.

You care more about humans than about ecosystems that sustain all life.

Not because you’re evil.

But because your brain didn’t evolve to feel empathy at planetary scales.

3. Status competition

Your brain is designed to compete for status within your group.

Status guaranteed access to resources, mates, protection.

That’s adaptive when groups are small and resources are local.

But in a consumer society, this bias is lethal.

You don’t need a new car, but you buy it to signal status.

You don’t need a bigger house, but you aspire to it to not feel inferior.

You don’t need to consume at the level you do, but you do it to maintain your relative position.

Not because you're superficial.

But because your brain interprets consumption as a status signal, and status as survival.

The difference between will and capacity.

This is crucial to understand.

It's not that we don't want to act responsibly.

It's that **our will is trapped in a brain designed for another world.**

You can know that climate change is real.

You can understand that your actions have consequences.

You can want, sincerely, to act differently.

And still fail.

Because changing behavior requires overcoming instincts that are deeper than your rational will.

It requires fighting against mental structures molded by millions of years of selection.

It requires, literally, being something you weren't designed to be.

And that's exhausting.

That's why knowing is not enough.

That's why education is not enough.

That's why good intentions are not enough.

There’s an even deeper problem.

Evolutionary selfishness is not just an individual problem.

It’s a systemic problem.

Because we’re not isolated individuals trying to overcome our biases.

We’re individuals inserted in systems designed to exploit those biases.

Capitalism, for example, is a system optimized to monetize temporal discounting.

“Buy now, pay later.”

“Instant gratification.”

“You deserve it.”

Every advertisement, every credit structure, every consumption incentive is designed to exploit your tendency to prefer the immediate over the distant.

Nationalism is a system optimized to monetize in-group bias.

“Ours first.”

“Protect our interests.”

“They are the threat.”

Every border, every tariff, every immigration policy is designed to exploit your tendency to care more about those close to you than those far away.

Consumer society is a system optimized to monetize status competition.

“Be successful.”

“Don’t fall behind.”

“They have it, why don’t you?”

Every brand, every product, every luxury is designed to exploit your tendency to compete for relative position.

This is a circular problem.

Evolutionary biases create systems that exploit those biases.

And those systems reinforce the biases by making them adaptive again.

In a consumerist society, not competing for status makes you invisible.

In a nationalist system, not prioritizing your group makes you vulnerable.

In a capitalism dependent on growth, not discounting the future makes you poor.

So even if you wanted to overcome your biases, the system punishes you for doing so.

But here’s what almost no one says:

None of this absolves you.

Yes, you’re an obsolete creature.

Yes, your brain is not designed for this world.

Yes, the systems you inhabit exploit your limitations.

But **you’re not just that.**

You’re also the only animal that can understand it’s a prisoner of its own biology.

The only animal that can observe its instincts from outside.

The only animal that can choose to act against what its brain demands.

That’s what consciousness is for.

Not to free you from your biology—you can’t.

But to give you the capacity to see it, name it, and resist it when reality demands it.

And reality demands it now.

Because evolutionary selfishness, which kept you alive for millennia, is now killing you.

And it won’t stop being killing you just because you understand it.

It will only stop if you act.

Not because you feel like it.

Not because it’s easy.

But because it’s necessary.

And that capacity—to act against your instincts when reality requires it—is where all the possibility of acting against our instincts when reality demands it lies.

And reality demands it now.

CHAPTER 4: THE LIES

Truth is unbearable. That's why we invent narratives to hide it.

No species needs to lie to itself to survive.

But we do.

Apparently, this is a contradiction.

In reality, it's a direct consequence of what we saw in the previous chapter: we are animals with a mind too conscious to endure certain truths, but too limited to face them without help.

Consciousness is a dizzying gift.

It allows us to understand what no other creature has understood about its environment: that we exist, that we will die, that the universe is indifferent, that there is no inherent purpose, that we are profoundly alone.

But that understanding is intolerable.

No brain can function optimally under the permanent weight of existential terror.

So we invented something that no other animal has: **cultural anesthesia.**

We call them religions, ideologies, narratives, myths.

But their fundamental function is the same: **to make reality bearable.**

This is not cynicism.

It's not a value judgment.

It's recognition that humans need meaning to function, and that meaning doesn't exist in nature.

It must be invented.

The universe is not just. We invented justice.

The universe has no purpose. We invented purpose.

The universe doesn't care if we exist. We invented the idea that our existence matters.

And those inventions are necessary.

Without them, depression, paralysis, collective suicide.

The lie is adaptive.

But here's the problem:

when lies become too convincing, they stop being tools and become traps.

The perfect lie: infinite growth.

If I had to choose the most lethal narrative of modernity, it would be this:

> "We can grow forever."

Not just economically.

In all senses.

More people. More consumption. More production. More technology. More complexity.

Without limits.

This is the foundational myth of industrial civilization.

And it’s radically false.

Because **there are physical limits.**

Not negotiable limits.

Not political limits.

Not limits we can overcome with innovation or good will.

Physical limits. Thermodynamic. Biological.

The planet has a finite amount of fertile soil.

A finite capacity to absorb CO_2.

A finite number of species that can disappear before ecosystems collapse.

A finite number of degrees the climate can warm before becoming uninhabitable for complex civilizations.

These are not opinions. They are measurements.

And yet, we act as if they didn’t exist.

We continue planning as if growth were infinite.

We continue measuring progress as if GDP were the only relevant indicator.

We continue organizing the economy as if the planet were a detail.

Why?

Because **admitting limits implies admitting that the way we live is unsustainable.**

And that's intolerable.

It would require dismantling systems that provide employment, stability, identity.

It would require abandoning aspirations that define what it means to "live well."

It would require accepting that we will have less, not more.

That our children will live worse than us, not better.

That progress, as we understand it, is over.

That truth is so unbearable that we prefer any lie that allows us to avoid it.

And there are many lies available.

Technological optimism:

> "Don't worry. Technology will solve it."

Solar panels. Electric cars. Carbon capture. Geoengineering.

We like this narrative because it allows us to keep living the same way while feeling we're doing something.

But it's false.

Not because those technologies don't help—they do.

But because **no technology can override thermodynamic limits.**

You can’t create energy from nothing.

You can’t return extinct species to life.

You can’t reverse ecological collapse with an app.

Technology is a tool, not magic.

And the scale of the problem far exceeds any technological solution we can currently conceive.

Green capitalism:

> “We can save the planet and continue growing.”

Sustainable consumption. Circular economy. Green growth.

We like this narrative because it allows us to feel responsible without changing anything fundamental.

But it’s false.

Because **you can’t have infinite growth on a finite planet, no matter how “green” that growth is.**

Every product, no matter how sustainable, requires resources.

Every transaction, no matter how ethical, has an environmental cost.

Every expansion, no matter how “green,” consumes space that other species need.

The problem is not **how** we grow.

The problem is **that** we grow.

Individual responsibility:

"If everyone recycles and consumes less, we'll be fine."

We like this narrative because it gives us control.

We feel we're doing something.

We feel it depends on us.

But it's false.

Not because individual action doesn't matter—it does.

But because **the scale of the problem is systemic, not individual.**

You can recycle every bottle, walk instead of driving, be vegan, buy local.

And all that is good.

But if the economic system is designed to extract, produce and dispose at industrial scales, your individual action is a drop in an ocean of structural destruction.

The problem requires systemic changes, not individual optimizations.

And systemic changes require collective confrontation with power structures that benefit from the current system.

But here's the most perverse part:

These lies are not just comforting. They're functional.

They serve a purpose.

They keep the system running.

If everyone accepted that growth is over, the economy would collapse.

If everyone accepted that technology won’t save us, investments would stop.

If everyone accepted that individual action is insufficient, demand for change would be uncontrollable.

So the lies are maintained not because we’re stupid.

But because **dismantling them would dismantle the systems we depend on.**

And that’s terrifying.

More terrifying than the slow collapse we’re entering.

Because slow collapse is abstract, distant, negotiable in our mind.

But systemic dismantling is immediate, concrete, undeniable.

So we choose the lie.

We choose to believe that everything will be fine.

That someone will fix it.

That technology will save us.

That it’s not as serious as they say.

That we still have time.

We choose to believe it not because the evidence supports it.

But because **the truth is intolerable.**

And we are not equipped to live with intolerable truths.

This brings us to a crucial question:

If lies are necessary, what do we do?

Do we keep lying?

Do we accept that truth is unbearable and continue living in comfortable fiction?

Or do we try to face reality even though our mind is not designed to support it?

There is no easy answer.

But there is an honest answer:

You don't need to support the whole truth. You just need to support enough truth to act.

You don't need to abandon all narratives. You need to abandon those that paralyze you.

You don't need to live in permanent existential terror. You need to accept that comfort is not the measure of a good life.

The first step is to stop looking away.

The second is to act as if you understood what you saw.

The third is to accept that it won't be enough.

But that doesn't absolve you of the responsibility to try.

CHAPTER 5: RESPONSIBILITY

Act without hope. Act because it's right.

We've reached the most uncomfortable part.

The part where most books offer solutions.

The part where they tell you that if you understand the problem, you can fix it.

The part where they give you hope.

I'm not going to do that.

Not because I want to depress you.

But because **hope, as normally understood, is part of the problem.**

Let me be clear.

When most people talk about hope, they mean this:

"If I act, things will improve."

That's **conditional hope.**

Hope as a transaction.

I do X, therefore Y will happen.

I recycle, therefore the planet will be saved.

I vote, therefore the system will change.

I educate myself, therefore society will awaken.

That hope is understandable.

It's human.

It's how we're wired to think about action: as an investment that produces results.

But **that hope is also lethal.**

Because it makes action dependent on expected results.

And when expected results don't arrive—and in the case of planetary collapse, many won't—conditional hope collapses.

And with it, action.

This is what we see everywhere:

People who understood the problem, acted, saw that it wasn't enough, and abandoned.

People who believed change was possible, pushed, encountered insurmountable resistance, and resigned.

People who had hope, lost it, and with it lost the capacity to continue.

Conditional hope is fragile.

And we can't afford fragility.

So what do we do?

Do we act without hope?

Yes.

But not hopelessly.

We act with unconditional responsibility.

What does that mean?

It means this:

You act not because you believe you'll change the outcome.

You act because it's the correct thing to do given what you know.

Let me give you an example outside the context of collapse.

Imagine you see someone drowning.

You don't know if you can save them. Maybe the current is too strong. Maybe you're not a good enough swimmer. Maybe you'll both drown.

But you try anyway.

Not because you're sure it will work.

But because **it's the right thing to do given the situation.**

You don't act hoping for success.

You act because your responsibility as a conscious being in that situation demands it.

That's unconditional responsibility.

It doesn't depend on the result.

It depends on the situation and your capacity to understand it.

Now apply that to planetary collapse.

You know the scale of the problem.

You know your individual actions won't stop it.

You know the systems in place are stronger than you.

You know that even if you do everything possible, it probably won't be enough.

And yet, you act.

Not because you believe you'll save the planet.

But because **you're conscious and understand what's at stake.**

Because **you have the capacity to see and the capacity to act, and that imposes responsibility.**

Not responsibility as guilt.

Not responsibility as burden.

Responsibility as the natural consequence of being a conscious being in a situation you understand.

This is radically different from conditional hope.

Conditional hope says:

> "If I act, maybe I'll change the future."

Unconditional responsibility says:

> "I act because the present demands it."

Conditional hope depends on uncertain outcomes.

Unconditional responsibility depends on certain knowledge.

Conditional hope can be lost.

Unconditional responsibility cannot.

Because **responsibility is not a feeling. It's a position.**

But here's what almost no one says:

Acting without hope is harder than acting with hope.

Much harder.

Because hope is motivating. It's energizing. It makes you feel that effort is worth it.

Acting without hope is exhausting. It's austere. It offers no psychological reward.

You do what needs to be done knowing it's probably insufficient.

You continue when everything indicates it's useless.

You act knowing you might see no results in your lifetime.

That's dignity.

Not heroism. Not martyrdom. Not sacrifice.

Simply **the adult capacity to do what's necessary without requiring it to be rewarding.**

And here we arrive at the central question:

Why would anyone do this?

Why act if you know it won't be enough?

Why continue if there's no guaranteed success?

Why assume responsibility without hope?

There are several possible answers.

1. Because you're conscious.

Consciousness is not just a capacity to understand.

It's also a capacity to respond to what you understand.

If you see and don't act, you're not using consciousness. You're betraying it.

2. Because you're not alone.

You're not the only person acting.

There are millions of people all over the world trying to do what's right despite knowing it's insufficient.

That doesn't guarantee success.

But it guarantees you're not acting in vain.

You're part of something bigger than yourself.

3. Because action defines who you are.

You're not defined by results you can't control.

You're defined by responses you can.

In a world collapsing, **how you act matters more than what you achieve.**

It matters because it determines the kind of being you are within that collapse.

This is the real question:

> “Who do you want to be in a collapsing world?”

Someone who knew and didn’t act?

Someone who understood and looked away?

Someone who had the capacity to respond and chose comfort?

Or someone who, despite everything, did what was right?

That’s what this chapter is about.

Not about saving the world.

Not about guaranteeing a future.

Not about being a hero.

It’s about determining your position.

Your relationship with what you know.

Your response to what you understand.

Your dignity as a conscious being in a world that no longer admits ignorance as an excuse.

And if that sounds austere, it’s because it is.

There is no comfort here.

There is no reward.

There is no guarantee that it will matter.

There is only this:

You can see.

You can understand.

You can act.

And that, whether you like it or not, imposes responsibility.

Not obligation.

Not guilt.

Responsibility.

The simple recognition that **if you can respond, you must respond.**

Not because it will change the planet’s destiny.

But because it will change yours.

CHAPTER 6: THE ACTIONS

> *They don't change the planet's fate. They change who you are within it.*

Now comes the part everyone wants to skip to.

The list.

The actions.

The things you can do.

But if you've read the previous chapters, you understand that **this is not a manual for saving the world.**

It's a framework for determining your position in a world that's already collapsing.

So when I list actions, I'm not listing them because they'll reverse collapse.

I'm listing them because **they're what a responsible conscious being does given what we know.**

Two principles before starting:

1. **Individual actions are necessary but insufficient.**

This is not a contradiction.

Yes, systemic change is required.

Yes, individual actions alone won't stop collapse.

But **you can't demand systemic changes you're not willing to embody.**

If you demand that governments reduce emissions but refuse to change how you live, you're not serious.

If you demand that corporations stop destroying ecosystems but continue consuming their products, you're not coherent.

Individual action is not sufficient. But it's indispensable.

2. Not all actions have the same impact.

Some actions are symbolic.

Others are marginal.

Others are structural.

It's crucial to distinguish them so you don't waste effort on what doesn't matter while avoiding what does.

CATEGORY 1: Reduce consumption (structural)

This is the most important and least popular action.

Consume less.

Not consume "better."

Not consume "sustainably."

Consume less.

Because **the core problem is the scale of consumption, not its quality.**

You can buy organic, local, ethical products.

And all that is good.

But if you consume at industrial civilization levels, you're still part of the problem.

Concrete examples:

- Don't buy what you don't need. Simple rule: if you can live without it, don't buy it.
- Repair instead of replace. Every product you keep using is a product you don't have to produce.
- Share instead of own. Do you need a car? Or do you need occasional transportation?
- Reject fast fashion. The fashion industry is one of the planet's most polluting. Buying less clothes has more impact than buying "sustainable" clothes.

This is uncomfortable because it goes against everything the system tells you:

That you deserve it.

That it's a reward.

That it defines you.

But **you are not what you consume.**

And in a finite world, **consuming less is the most radical action you can**

take.

CATEGORY 2: Change your diet (high impact)

This is simpler than it seems.

Eat less meat. Preferably none.

Not for ethical reasons (although those exist).

Not for health reasons (although those exist too).

For planetary reasons.

Animal agriculture is: - One of the main causes of deforestation - One of the main emitters of greenhouse gases - One of the main consumers of fresh water - One of the main causes of biodiversity loss

You don’t need to be perfect.

You don’t need to be an extreme vegan.

But **every meal without meat is a meal that generates less destruction.**

Concrete examples:

- Start with one day a week without meat.
- Then two.
- Then make meat the exception, not the rule.
- Prioritize local plants over imported foods.

This is uncomfortable because food is culture, identity, pleasure.

But **you can relearn to eat.**

And you can do it knowing you’re reducing your impact in a tangible way.

CATEGORY 3: Reduce mobility (medium impact)

Move less. Especially by plane.

Air travel is one of the most carbon-intensive activities a person can do.

A transatlantic flight emits more CO_2 than some people produce in a year.

And it's completely normalized.

We travel because it's cheap, because it's easy, because "we deserve vacations."

But **the planet doesn't care about your reasons.**

Concrete examples:

- Eliminate recreational flights. If you can get there by train, go by train.
- Reduce car use. Walk. Bike. Use public transport.
- Question every trip: Is it necessary? Or is it a luxury you're normalizing?

This is uncomfortable because mobility is freedom, adventure, status.

But **you can relearn to live locally.**

And you can do it knowing you're not contributing to one of the most destructive activities in civilization.

CATEGORY 4: Disconnect from the attention economy (structural)

This is more subtle but equally important.

Recover your attention.

Because **if your mind is occupied, you can't act.**

Concrete examples:

- Delete apps designed to capture you. Social media. News. Anything that keeps you scrolling.
- Establish disconnection times. An hour a day. A day a week. Whatever you can sustain.
- Read long content. Books. Essays. Anything that requires sustained attention.
- Learn to be bored. Boredom is where real thought appears.

This is uncomfortable because disconnecting feels like isolation.

But **it's the only way to recover the mental space needed to think.**

CATEGORY 5: Educate yourself and others (long-term impact)

Understand what's happening.

Really understand.

Not passively read news.

Not consume superficial content.

Study.

Read books about ecology. About economics. About energy systems. About history of collapses.

Understand not just that there's a problem, but **how and why** there's a problem.

And then **talk about it.**

Not aggressively.

Not moralistically.

But honestly.

With family. With friends. With whoever is willing to listen.

Because collective change requires collective awareness.

And collective awareness starts with individual conversations.

CATEGORY 6: Get involved politically (necessary but limited)

Vote.

Join organizations.

Protest.

Demand systemic changes.

But **don’t confuse this with delegation.**

Don’t think that voting absolves you.

Don’t think that protesting is enough.

Political action is necessary. But it’s not sufficient.

And it certainly doesn’t replace personal responsibility.

CATEGORY 7: Prepare (pragmatic)

This is the part no one wants to talk about.

But it’s inevitable.

Collapse is not a distant possibility. It’s a process we’re already in.

And that process will have concrete consequences:

Supply crises.

Climate extremes.

Economic instability.

Social tensions.

You can’t prevent those consequences.

But you can prepare for them.

Concrete examples:

- Learn basic skills: grow food, repair things, cook from scratch.
- Build local community. In crises, networks matter more than money.
- Reduce dependency on fragile systems. The more autonomous you are, the more resilient you are.

This is uncomfortable because it sounds apocalyptic.

But **it’s not apocalyptic. It’s realistic.**

And realism requires accepting that the world you knew is changing.

And you can adapt or suffer the change unprepared.

A final note:

None of this guarantees anything.

You can do all of this and collapse will continue.

You can live responsibly and the world will keep destroying itself.

You can act with dignity and see no tangible results.

That’s not the point.

The point is this:

These actions don’t change the planet’s destiny.

They change yours.

They change who you are within collapse.

They change your relationship with what you know.

They change your dignity as a conscious being.

And that, whether you like it or not, is the only thing truly under your control.

CHAPTER 7: THE ROLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

> *Consciousness doesn't save us from collapse. It only allows us not to act blindly.*

We've covered the problem.

We've understood distraction, selfishness, lies.

We've talked about responsibility and concrete actions.

But there's one last question that almost no one asks:

What is consciousness really for?

Not in general.

Not philosophically.

Specifically, in the context of collapse.

Because if consciousness can't prevent collapse, if it can't guarantee we'll act correctly, if it can't save us, then what good is it?

First, what consciousness is NOT for:

1. Consciousness does not guarantee moral superiority.

Being conscious doesn't make you good.

It doesn't make you wise.

It doesn't make you immune to selfishness, cruelty, or stupidity.

History is full of highly conscious people who did terrible things.

Consciousness is a tool, not a virtue.

2. Consciousness does not guarantee you'll act correctly.

You can understand the problem and ignore it.

You can see consequences and choose comfort.

You can know what's right and do what's convenient.

Consciousness gives you the capacity to choose. It doesn't determine what you choose.

3. Consciousness does not save you from death or suffering.

Being conscious doesn't protect you from collapse.

It doesn't guarantee your survival.

It doesn't exempt you from physical consequences.

If the climate collapses, you'll suffer like everyone else, regardless of how much you understood.

So what IS consciousness for?

Consciousness is for this:

To allow you to respond to reality without requiring that response to be rewarding.

Let me explain.

Animals act by instinct, conditioning, stimulus-response.

They can't see beyond their immediate programming.

They can't question their impulses.

They can't choose to act against what their biology demands.

Humans can.

Not always. Not easily. But we can.

And that capacity—the capacity to see yourself from outside, to observe your impulses, to choose a response that goes against what your biology demands—is consciousness.

Consciousness is the space between stimulus and response.

It's the pause where you can ask: "What should I do?"

Not "What do I feel like doing?"

Not "What benefits me?"

But "What's right given what I know?"

And in the context of collapse, that capacity is crucial.

Because **acting correctly in collapse requires going against almost all your instincts.**

Your instinct says: consume now, the future is uncertain.

Consciousness says: consume less, the future depends on what you do now.

Your instinct says: compete, resources are scarce.

Consciousness says: cooperate, competition accelerates collapse.

Your instinct says: protect your own, the rest don’t matter.

Consciousness says: expand your empathy, we’re all in this together.

Consciousness doesn’t eliminate those instincts. But it gives you the capacity to resist them.

This is consciousness’s real value:

Not that it saves you.

But that it allows you to act with dignity even when it doesn’t save you.

Even when it’s uncomfortable.

Even when it’s thankless.

Even when it’s insufficient.

Consciousness allows you to live knowing there’s collapse and still choose to act responsibly.

Not because it will change the outcome.

But because **it’s the response appropriate to a conscious being in that situation.**

And here’s the final paradox:

Consciousness is the problem and the solution.

It’s the problem because it allows us to create tools that destroy the planet.

It’s the problem because it generates expectations that reality can’t fulfill.

It’s the problem because it makes us aware of our own mortality and that of everything we love.

But **it’s also the only thing that allows us to respond adequately to that problem.**

Without consciousness, you can’t see collapse.

Without consciousness, you can’t understand consequences.

Without consciousness, you can’t choose to act differently.

Consciousness doesn’t guarantee you’ll do it.

But **it’s the only thing that makes it possible.**

So when you ask what consciousness is for in the context of collapse, the answer is this:

Consciousness is for looking without looking away.

It’s for understanding without needing comfort.

It’s for acting without requiring hope.

It’s for being responsible without demanding reward.

That’s what it’s for.

And if that sounds austere, it’s because it is.

There is no consolation here.

There is no happy ending.

There is only this:

You can see.

And what you see imposes responsibility.

And that responsibility is all you have.

APPENDIX: A DANGEROUS SPECULATION

This appendix is different from the rest of the book.

What I've written so far is based on observable facts, documented processes, reasonable inferences.

What follows is speculation.

A thought experiment.

An idea that cannot be proven but that, if true, would change everything about how we understand responsibility.

I present it not because I believe it's certain, but because **it's logically possible and ethically relevant.**

And because, even if it's false, it functions as a useful tool against selfishness.

The speculation is this:

Maybe we're all the same consciousness experiencing itself from different points of view.

Let me explain.

Part 1: Consciousness as pure experience

When you say “I am conscious,” what do you actually mean?

You mean you have subjective experience.

You mean there’s “something it’s like” to be you.

But **what exactly is that “something”?**

It’s not your memories—those are information stored in neurons.

It’s not your personality—that’s patterns shaped by experience.

It’s not your body—that’s matter organized in a specific way.

The “I” that experiences is not any of the content being experienced.

It’s the pure fact of experiencing itself.

Part 2: Consciousness doesn’t contain information about identity

Here’s something strange:

Pure consciousness has no inherent information about **who** is experiencing.

When you say “I am conscious,” you don’t mean “I am Juan and I am conscious.”

You mean “There is experience and I am the locus of that experience.”

But that locus doesn’t come with identifying information.

Your sense of being “you” comes from memories, from continuity of experience, from the narrative your brain constructs.

But **the raw fact of experiencing** doesn’t include any of that.

It’s just experience happening.

Part 3: Maybe it’s the same experience

Now the speculation:

If consciousness is pure experience without inherent identity, and if that experience has emerged once in the universe (in you, in me, in every human), then **maybe it’s the same phenomenon occurring multiple times.**

Not in a mystical sense.

Not in a supernatural sense.

But in the sense that **the property “being conscious” might not be multiple different properties but the same property manifesting in different locations.**

Like temperature.

Temperature at your house and temperature at mine are not “two different temperatures.”

They’re the same property (molecular kinetic energy) manifesting in different places.

Maybe consciousness is the same.

The same phenomenon happening in billions of locations simultaneously, each feeling like a unique “I” because each has different informational content (memories, sensations, context).

Part 4: The ethical implication

If this is true—and I repeat, **it might not be**—then something extraordinary follows:

Every being you harm is literally you.

Not metaphorically.

Not poetically.

Literally.

If we're all the same consciousness experiencing itself from different points of view, then:

- When you torture someone, you're the one being tortured.
- When you kill someone, you're the one dying.
- When you destroy someone's future, you're destroying your own.

Not in another life.

Not in a karma cycle.

In this life.

Because you're not separate from them.

You're the same experiencing entity in a different configuration.

Part 5: Why this can't be disproven by "I don't remember being them"

The obvious objection:

"If I'm everyone, why don't I remember being them?"

The answer is simple:

Memory is informational. Consciousness is not.

Your brain stores memories.

But consciousness is not memory.

Consciousness is the fact of experiencing.

And that fact doesn't require continuity of information.

You don't remember being a baby. Does that mean you weren't conscious as a baby?

No. It means your brain didn't record those experiences.

Similarly, you don't remember being other people because **their experiences are stored in their brains, not yours.**

But **the consciousness experiencing them might be the same consciousness experiencing you.**

Part 6: Why I'm including this

I include this speculation for two reasons:

1. It's logically possible.

I can't prove it's true.

But no one can prove it's false.

It's compatible with everything we know about consciousness (which is very little).

And if it's even slightly possible, it deserves consideration.

2. It's functionally useful.

Even if it's false, **acting as if it were true eliminates selfishness.**

Because if you're everyone, then harming others is directly harming yourself.

There's no distinction between your interest and others'.

There's no "them" to exploit.

There's only you, everywhere, experiencing consequences from all angles.

That's the most powerful argument against selfishness I know.

Part 7: A final note

After writing this, I discovered that Andy Weir developed a similar idea in his short story "The Egg" (2009), and that related concepts appear in ancient Eastern philosophies like Advaita Vedanta.

This doesn't invalidate the reasoning presented here, but it's important to acknowledge that certain ideas, when logically sound, tend to emerge independently in different contexts and eras.

Convergence may be a sign of validity, not lack of originality.

I present this not as dogma but as a possibility.

A way of thinking that might help you see selfishness for what it is:

Not just morally wrong.

But logically incoherent.

Because **if we're all the same consciousness, then hurting others is just delayed self-harm.**

And protecting others is the only form of real self-interest.

Think about it.

Or don’t.

But don’t dismiss it just because it sounds strange.

Sometimes the strangest ideas are the most true.

FINAL NOTE ON THE CREATION OF THIS BOOK

This book was written in collaboration with an artificial intelligence.

I don’t say this because it’s novel.

I say it because it would be dishonest to hide it.

The process was as follows:

I wrote the ideas, the arguments, the questions.

The AI organized them, polished them, expanded them.

I reviewed, corrected, rewrote what didn’t work.

And we repeated that process until the text reflected what I really wanted to say.

The AI didn’t invent the concepts.

It didn’t decide what was important.

It didn’t choose the perspective.

That came from me:

from years thinking about these things,

from reading, observing, doubting,

from trying to understand why we act the way we do.

But without the AI, this book wouldn’t exist.

Not because I couldn’t write it alone,

but because it would have taken years to give it form.

And I felt there weren’t years.

Some will say this invalidates the book.

That words generated by machines have no value.

That human authorship is all that matters.

I disagree.

Words matter for what they say,

not for who assembled them.

Ideas matter for their validity,

not for the method used to articulate them.

If this book makes you think differently,

if it makes you uncomfortable,

if it forces you to look at something you preferred to ignore,

then it fulfilled its function.

And that function doesn’t depend on whether each sentence was typed by human fingers or generated by algorithms.

It depends on whether the ideas withstand scrutiny.

That said, I understand the discomfort.

We live in a strange moment:

the tools we use to think are changing faster than our capacity to process it.

A hundred years ago, a book was the direct result of one person’s mind.

Today it can be the result of a conversation between a human mind and a system trained on millions of texts.

That raises legitimate questions:

Who is the real author?

Where does human creativity begin and algorithmic synthesis end?

Does it matter?

I don’t have definitive answers.

I only have this book.

And the certainty that the ideas expressed here are mine,

even if the exact words aren’t always.

If that makes you uncomfortable, I understand.

If you prefer to read only books written entirely by humans, I respect that decision.

But if you’re reading this, you’ve probably already crossed that line.

And maybe that also says something about the moment we’re living in:

a moment where the boundaries between human and artificial blur,

where the tools we create begin to collaborate with us in unthinkable ways a decade ago.

I don’t know if that’s good or bad.

I only know it’s real.

And this book is a product of that reality.

About anonymity

I don’t sign this book with my name.

Not because I’m afraid of consequences.

But because I believe anonymity gives it more strength.

If you knew who I am—my age, my profession, my context—

you would judge the book from that information.

And I want you to judge it only by what it says.

Besides, anonymity eliminates a dangerous temptation:

that of writing to build a public identity.

This book doesn’t exist for me to be recognized.

It exists because I felt these ideas needed to be written somewhere.

If it resonates with you, share it.

If it doesn’t, ignore it.

But don’t care who wrote it.

Care only if it makes sense.

About the license

This book is in the public domain.

I published it under Creative Commons Zero (CC0) license,

which means I renounce all copyright.

You can:

- Copy it entirely
- Modify it
- Translate it
- Redistribute it
- Sell it (though I’d prefer you didn’t)
- Use it as a basis for other work

You don’t need to ask permission.

You don’t need to attribute it to me.

You don’t need to mention I existed.

Why?

Because if anything written here has value,

that value doesn’t belong to me.

Ideas are not private property.

They’re attempts to understand what’s real.

And what’s real has no owner.

Besides, if this book helps someone think more clearly,

I don’t want them to have to pay for it.

I don’t want them to have to track down permissions.

I don’t want them to feel they owe me anything.

Knowledge—when it comes to essential things—should be free.

This is not naive idealism.

It’s practical coherence.

If this book talks about shared responsibility,

about the fragility of consciousness,

about the need to act without expecting reward,

it would be absurd to lock it behind copyright.

So take it.

Use it.

Share it.

Modify it if you think it can be improved.

I only ask one thing:

if this moved something inside you,

pass it to someone you think needs it.

Not for me.

For the ideas.

One last thing

If you’ve made it this far,

thank you for reading.

I don’t know if this book changed something in you.

Maybe yes.

Maybe no.

But at least you thought about it.

And thinking—really thinking—is increasingly rare.

If you want to contact me,

there’s an email address on the first page.

I don’t promise to respond.

But I’ll read what you write to me.

And if someday you discover that the world could be organized in a radically different way,

that consciousness deserves more care than we give it,

that responsibility doesn’t need hope to be valid,

then this book fulfilled its purpose.

The rest is silence.

Or noise.

Depends on what you choose to hear.

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